

promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which were in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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American Country Life and the Coming Dawn of Peace

By David E. Lindstrom*

The American Country Life movement has held the high esteem of many of the most influential leaders in rural affairs throughout the years because of its continuous and persistent emphasis upon the human values in rural life. It has broadened the commonly accepted objectives of country life to include in addition to economic development, the improvement of rural health, education, recreation, woman's work, and the country church.

MUST PLAN TOGETHER

The American Country Life Conference can play a significant role in making a lasting peace. It comes at a most strategic time, when many people are fearfully concerned about the postwar period; fearfully, because of what can come in the way of a collapse of prices, a lowering of living levels, a burdensome tax load, a surplus of food and fiber products, unemployment for millions of people, and because of the threat of even greater governmental supervision and control over human affairs. Rural people, especially, are fearful of the return of bad times which followed the last war; that another war is destined to come when our five-year-olds grow into young manhood. It is well that we recognize these fears, for most of the above-named dangers can be prevented through planning together now.

Please note that I have stressed planning together now. A great deal of planning is now being done on the international, the national, the state and the community level. It is my impression that much of it is non-integrated — many groups are planning, not knowing too well what the other is doing, and each somewhat jealously proud of what it is doing, oblivious or disdainful of planning with others. This is not the way in which to plan if we are to meet and solve our mutual postwar problems.

We can plan together in our communities. Normally the rank and file of rural people, once they experience cooperation, prefer it to efforts which pull some into one group and some into another, often causing cleavages between them. Rural people grew up in neighborhoods, and in many rural areas they still know the wholesome results of genuine, friendly, considerate, mutual, beneficial neighborhood life. In the neighborhood we can plan in a democratic fashion for the farms,

*Dr. David E. Lindstrom is Rural Sociologist at the University of Illinois. His Presidential Address before the twenty-fourth American Country Life Conference, 1944, is reprinted from the Report, FARM AND COUNTRY LIFE AFTER THE WAR with kind permission. It is selected because of its relevant message to the post-war period

for the towns and between town and country. The best planning is not bureaucratic, it is planning by the people for whom plans are made.

We have the great farmers' organizations represented here and each has its own program. The producer and consumer cooperatives have their leaders present; they have their postwar plans. The rural church is represented by Catholic, Protestant and Jewish leadership; no group in America has been more active in the development of postwar plans than have the church groups. The Land-Grant Colleges and Universities and the U. S. Department of Agriculture are represented here; they, too, have worked out preliminary postwar plans. Leaders in rural education are here; none are more conscious of the problems facing the schools now and in the postwar period than are these leaders. Librarians have been in the forefront of planning efforts; they are represented. The leaders of youth groups are here. Youth are bearing the brunt of the war and their wishes, desires, and plans must be known and recognized.

If we are successful here in planning together on a small international scale, why can't it be done on a larger basis? Many of us represent what commonly are known as voluntary groups. We think our government should take its cue from such groups because that is the democratic way. The question is then, can democracy work on an international scale? There are leaders here who think it can.

Unfortunately, there has not been the most effective cooperation on the national level in the United States even in wartime. Efforts to bring farm organizations and government leaders into agreement on wartime policies have not been too successful. It may be that leadership in the rural church or the rural school, or both, must take the initiative for they function in every rural community. They make contact with more rural people of all ages than any other rural agency. They certainly should take some initiative, at least on the community level.

We must work for more integration on the state and county level. How much more could be accomplished if the extension service, vocational agriculture, soil conservation, farm credit, health, library and similar professional leaders could form a working agreement and make cooperative plans on the state and county levels. They would then complement rather than conflict as is so often the case at present.

The task of improving human relations begins, and must be constantly worked at, in the neighborhood and community. Efforts on the county, state, national, and international levels are justified only in the degree to which they contribute to improved human welfare in the home, the neighborhood, and the community. This conference will find itself only by becoming completely absorbed with this objective. Its influence must be reflected in the policies, programs, and procedures of all organizations and agencies serving rural life; it must live in the hearts and minds of those living in the country the world over.

PLACE HUMAN WELFARE FIRST

The committees, I hope, will place chief emphasis on human welfare which in turn is dependent upon the creation of wealth. We must take care, however, that wealth be created for human welfare and not as an end in itself.

The basic real wealth comes from the soil. It is also from those who till the soil that the surplus human stock comes to maintain the population of our towns and cities. Whereas the richest land produces the most food; the poorest

land produces the most children. This situation is not characteristic of North America alone. It is true in Europe, Asia, and the Latin American countries. It is estimated that more than eighty percent of the world's population live in rural areas. These areas which have a great amount of their population and wealth going to urban centers need help to conserve their natural and human resources. In the past when help was given to people, it was called subsidies, but in the future we will look upon such compensation as necessary for the welfare of society; children should be considered an investment.

The creation of wealth will not in itself necessarily result in the advancement of human welfare; rural areas have continued throughout our history to create wealth but they have become more and more impoverished. We now have the techniques to create enough wealth so that everyone can have enough to eat and wear. We are still far behind in the development of the right kind of human relations so that all men everywhere can share equitably in that wealth. What are the means? The following are some of the things we should look forward to if rural life is to advance.

Much has been said about family-sized farms. The ideal would be to encourage youth to work for farm ownership on farms large enough, in general, to support two families, fathers and sons (or daughters); and the son who stays on the farm should be protected against the loss of wealth to other heirs who work elsewhere. Tenancy, also, can be a good thing if the tenant is protected by compensation for improvements and if a system can be worked out so that he can own the place after not too long a time. Land should be valued on the basis of its productive capacity; not on its speculative value. The choice of who is to farm is of concern to all of society. Farms should not be the dumping ground of the city's unemployed. The church and the school have a responsibility in helping determine who shall farm. This means that church and school leaders must know rural life and its problems.

But having the right kind of farms will not solve the problem of keeping the right kind of youth on farms. Decent houses for laborers and tenants as well as owners, modern conveniences, and cultural advantages comparable to those in the city -- these are the kind of living standards that will attract youth to farm life. Health facilities, schools, churches, libraries and adequate recreational facilities for rural people should be as good as for those of urban people. It will be necessary to train and keep in rural areas the best kind of teachers, preachers, doctors and other professional people. They must be assured of as good pay and living conditions there as they can get elsewhere. Because rural people lose so much of their wealth to cities, urban areas must help support these services financially. But the control of policies governing them should be largely retained by the rural people themselves.

EDUCATION TOMORROW

We are slowly changing our ideas about education. We now know that all kinds of groups are carrying on educational activities, some good, some bad, and they do not always agree on what should be taught. The school is no longer the only educational agency in the community and children are only one of the groups needing education. The churches, the farmers, homemakers, rural youth, civic, political and government organizations -- each has its own educational program. The radio, the newspapers and magazines, the library -- all are carrying on educational activities. Although social changes come slowly through education, it should be the chief method of causing people to change their ways in a democratic society.

We look to the schools as the chief educational agency; should they enlarge their functions to take over the major responsibility of adult education in the rural community? Why not develop an integrated community educational program with the school as the center? The educational program must provide improvement not only in reading, writing and arithmetic, but also in the full social development of the individual; not only in the grades and high school, but for adults as well. It should provide for the development of good character and citizenship. It must provide vocational improvement and education in better home life. It should be concerned with living and life in the rural community. All the groups carrying on educational programs have a part to play. Should each go its way or can we really develop a coordinated community education program in our rural communities?

The advance in economic cooperation in this country is phenomenal. We doubtless will see more cooperatives develop in the postwar period. They are a favored form of economic organization and will be more so, for private enterprise is now and will be faced with high tax burdens. I am for economic cooperation; but I'd like to see it become more of a people's movement. Too many cooperatives function now without much direct contact with the members, except to do business with them and pay them patronage checks. Several things are wrong with the cooperative movement in this country. There is no spiritual drive behind the cooperatives as there has been in Denmark where cooperation has been so phenomenally successful. There is a division in the ranks of cooperatives themselves. Then too, farmer members are members in name only -- few of them exercise a voice in the making of policies. Also, producer cooperatives are not friendly with consumer cooperatives. These conditions can be changed if the educational forces of the community will become more interested in teaching the principles behind cooperation and if the leaders of cooperatives will agree on their objectives. It has been done in other countries and I think it can be done here.

Most of the emphasis in international conferences which affect rural people has been on food and nutrition. This is the first essential in a successful rehabilitation program but the manner in which devastated countries are fed and rehabilitated is also of concern. Surely we can provide them with food, but will this be enough? The future possibility of a permanent peace depends in large part, I believe, on the way in which, and the extent to which living levels of all people everywhere can be raised. We would not only have greatly expanded markets, but we would have a better kind of people were our goal that of helping people everywhere attain for themselves a standard of living comparable to our own. We can then approach the ideal of world free trade.

Human welfare can be improved if we give due attention to the quality of life in rural areas; the quality of the human stock; of family life; of education of spiritual life; of cooperation; and the quality of international relations that will put human welfare above a desire for power.